



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

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April 1, 2019

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Senate Concurrent Resolution 23 and Senate Resolution 16 – Requesting the Legislative Reference Bureau to Establish a Task Force to Review Hawaii's Current Voter Education System and Propose Improvements


The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) offers comments on Senate Concurrent Resolution 23 and Senate Resolution 16 – Requesting the Legislative Reference Bureau to Establish a Task Force to Review Hawaii's Current Voter Education System and Propose Improvements

The State Office of Elections has been very supportive and proactive of voters with disabilities and establishing a task force to review Hawaii's current voter education system to propose improvements is an excellent step in assisting voters with disabilities to understand what is on the ballot to make informed choices. This support from the Office of Elections is included in the "Whereas" paragraph on page 1, lines 21-23.

To determine what appropriate voter education means for voters with disabilities, voters with disabilities need to be included on the task force. We ask that representatives with disabilities are included on the task force especially a person who are deaf and a person who is blind on the task force due their specific needs for communication access. For a deaf person and a person who is blind and a first-time voter, it would be an excellent opportunity for them to attend a voter education class that explains the ballot measures in plain language. By including a voter who is deaf and one who is blind on the task force that person can provide insights of which other voters are unaware. DCAB is available as a resource in finding voters with disabilities to participate on the task force.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on these measures.

Respectfully submitted,


for FRANCINE WAI
Executive Director

Charlotte A. Carter-Yamauchi
Director

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LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU
State of Hawaii
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Written Comments

SCR23

REQUESTING THE LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU TO ESTABLISH A TASK FORCE TO REVIEW HAWAII'S CURRENT VOTER EDUCATION SYSTEM AND PROPOSE IMPROVEMENTS

Charlotte A. Carter-Yamauchi, Director
Legislative Reference Bureau

Presented to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Monday, April 1, 2019, 10:20 a.m.
Conference Room 211

Chair Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee:

Good morning Chair Dela Cruz and members of the Committee, my name is Charlotte Carter-Yamauchi and I am the Director of the Legislative Reference Bureau. Thank you for providing the opportunity to submit written comments on S.C.R. No. 23, Requesting the Legislative Reference Bureau to Establish a Task Force to Review Hawaii's Current Voter Education System and Propose Improvements.

The purpose of this measure is to request that the Bureau establish a task force to review Hawaii's current voter education system and propose improvements, including recommendations on costs, best practices, and the design of future voter education systems.

The Bureau takes no position on the merits of this measure, but submits the following comments for your consideration.

As a general matter, the Bureau lacks the subject matter expertise and resources, including but not limited to sufficient research and administrative staff, to provide any administrative or logistical support to convene a task force of this nature. Moreover, the Bureau does not possess the facilities to accommodate meetings of a task force, nor do we

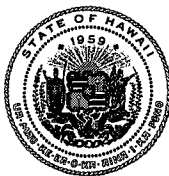
possess any priority for requesting use of any of the conference rooms throughout the Capitol.

If the Committee decides to recommend the adoption of this measure, we respectfully request that it be amended by removing the Bureau as the convening authority and replacing it with a convener with subject matter expertise in voter education and with the resources to accommodate the needs of a task force. For example, the Chief Election Officer, the Elections Commission, or the Attorney General would have more inherent expertise and access to resources on this subject than the Bureau.

The Bureau would also like to point out that it seems that the Elections Commission, established pursuant to section 11-7, Hawaii Revised Statutes, the duties of which include, among other things, conducting hearings, hiring and evaluating the Chief Election Officer, and advising the Chief Election Officer on matters relating to elections, would be more appropriate for this task. Furthermore, under section 11-8.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes, the Elections Commission is already required by law to conduct an elections review program, which, in relevant part, states that the Commission shall develop and implement the program to make recommendations on methods to improve elections. Finally, requesting that the Elections Commission conduct such endeavor would obviate the need to convene a separate task force. If the Committee would still like to keep the Bureau involved, we request that the Bureau's role be limited to drafting proposed legislation for the entity requested to conduct the task.

If the measure is amended to address the concerns noted above to narrow the scope of the Bureau's involvement with assisting an entity with the drafting of proposed legislation, the Bureau believes that the services requested under the measure would be manageable and that the Bureau will be able to provide the services in the time allotted; provided that the Bureau's interim workload is not adversely impacted by too many other studies or additional responsibilities, such as conducting studies, writing or finalizing other reports, drafting legislation, or any combination of these for the Legislature or for other state agencies, task forces, or working groups that may be requested or required under other legislative measures.

Thank you again for your consideration.



**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF ELECTIONS**

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SCOTT T. NAGO
CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER

TESTIMONY OF THE

CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER, OFFICE OF ELECTIONS

TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

ON SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 23

**REQUESTING THE LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU TO ESTABLISH A
TASK FORCE TO REVIEW HAWAII'S CURRENT VOTER EDUCATION
SYSTEM AND PROPOSE IMPROVEMENTS**

April 1, 2019

Chair Dela Cruz and members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 23. The purpose of this resolution is to request the Legislative Reference Bureau to establish a task force to review Hawaii's current voter education system and propose improvements.

The Office of Elections believes in an informed electorate and promoting elections. Currently, our office implements an outreach program to educate the public about voting services, voting procedures, and voting rights. During an election year, in addition to our outreach program, we develop a media campaign which focuses on recruiting election day officials, dates and deadlines, voter registration, and voting instructions. We believe this task force would help us to identify best practices and develop new programs to maximize voter registration and encourage participation in the electoral process.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 23.

SCR-23

Submitted on: 3/30/2019 1:01:50 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2019 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Andrea Quinn	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Honorable Committee Members:

Please support SCR23, which should help increase the typically dismal voter turnout here in Hawai'i.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony.

Andrea Quinn
Kihei

SCR-23

Submitted on: 3/29/2019 3:17:01 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2019 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Colin D Moore	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Chair Dela Cruz and Committee Members:

I strongly support SCR 23, which requests the Legislative Reference Bureau establish a Task Force to review Hawaii's current voter education system and propose improvements.

A task force could help the Office of Election identify best practices in voter education, including the development of a voter's information pamphlet.

In sixteen states across the nation, the office of elections is required to publish and distribute a voter information pamphlet. Nearly every empirical study of voters' guides indicates that they are an inexpensive and effective way to increase civic engagement.

First, voters read them and find them useful. One survey of Californians found that a majority of people who read their guide considered it their most important source of election information.

Second, voters' guides can level the playing field for candidates who are unable to raise large sums of money. In many states, all candidates are given the opportunity to communicate directly to voters through a brief written statement included in the pamphlet.

Finally, voters' guides reduce what is known as "voter drop-off rates," which occur when citizens don't vote on certain questions or for certain offices. This is often because they simply have no idea who the candidates are or any understanding of the ballot questions – and a voters' guide can help. One study from Washington State, for example, found that the number of blank votes dropped significantly after the state issued its voters' pamphlet.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SCR 23.



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COMMITTEE ON WYAS AND MEANS
MONDAY, April 1, 2019, 10:20 a.m. Room 211

SCR 23 REQUESTING THE LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU TO ESTABLISH A TASK FORCE TO REVIEW HAWAII'S
CURRENT VOTER EDUCATION SYSTEM AND PROPOSE IMPROVEMENTS

TESTIMONY

Janet Mason, Legislative Committee, League of Women Voters of Hawaii

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Keith-Agaran and Committee Members:

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii strongly supports SCR 23/SR16, which requests the Legislative Reference Bureau establish a Task Force to review Hawaii's current voter education system and propose improvements.

Voters should be assured of finding official voting information where they look for it, and this means choices: online, through smartphones and in paper format. Voters need answers to basic questions such as "Where's my absentee ballot?" "Which candidates are on my ballot?" and "What does this ballot question mean"? Right now, there's little or no official information about these questions published by State or County elections officials.

To make good choices (nor merely a random ballot selection), voters should also have the benefit of information that helps them compare candidates for state, local and federal elections. The leaders we elect make decisions that affect our daily lives.

Usually voters also face important ballot questions relating to the Hawaii Constitution and county charters. Voting on such questions is our chance to stand up for what matters most to us and have an impact on the issues that affect us, our communities, our families and our future. Understanding the "pros and cons" of such questions would go a long way toward making an informed choice.

While organizations like the League of Women Voters have historically undertaken such education and comparison, this has not been done thoroughly or consistently. The media also serves an important role



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in bringing these questions to the public. But by comparison, the public sector is a statewide organization with statewide distribution networks.

Soon, voting by mail will probably be a reality in Hawaii. Messaging about practical questions such as when ballots will be mailed out, what's in their voting packet, handling their ballot and return of the ballot before the deadline is already available, but with the all-mail approach new logistical information (such as the location of voter service centers) will be called for, and more people will need to be reached.

We want the Office of Elections and County Clerks to have confidence that the voting public appreciates and will cooperate in providing this essential public service. A task force of voluntary community representatives and key voting officials could assess what's being done statewide, what best practices look like, and suggest the way forward. "Thinking before doing" would provide a basis for an official plan, and a metric against which to weigh optimal use of taxpayer dollars.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.